

Message Text

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EXDIS ADDEE HANDLE AS SPECAT EXCLUSIVE

FOLLOWING REPEAT BANGKOK 8033 ACTION SECSTATE DTD 05 MAY

QTE

SECRET BANGKOK 8033

EXDIS

E. O. 11652: XGDS-3

TAGS: MASS, TH

SUBJ: CAMBODIAN AND VIETNAMESE MAP AND MASF ASSETS

DEPT PASS INFO SECDEF AND CINCPAC

SUMMARY: DISPOSITION OF VIETNAMESE MASF ASSETS CONTINUES TO DOMINATE PUBLIC ATTENTION HERE, BUT RTG, ITS SPINE OBVIOUSLY STIFFENED BY THAI MILITARY, SEEMS TO HAVE PULLED ITSELF TOGETHER AND IS ADMITTING THAT ASSETS BELONG TO U.S. WHILE THIS TAKES SOME HEAT OFF, REMOVAL FROM THAILAND OF F-5'S, A-37'S, ETC., SHOULD CONTINUE AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE CONSISTENT WITH SAFE HANDLING. OUTLOADING OPERATIONS WILL BE SUSPENDED DURING MEDIA VISIT TO UTAPAO OF SEVERAL HOURS DURATION MAY 6, AT INSISTENCE OF SUPREME COMMAND. END SUMMARY.

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1. THE QUESTION OF DISPOSITION OF THE VIETNAMESE MASF ASSETS IN THAILAND, ALMOST ENTIRELY AIRCRAFT, CONTINUES TO DOMINATE THE HEADLINES HERE. HANOI AND THE PRG ARE USING THESE ASSETS TO APPLY PRESSURE, EXPLOITING OF CLEARLY

EMERGENT THAI DESIRE TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH VIETNAM. ACCORDING TO PRESS, FOREIGN MINISTER OF PRG HAS SENT NOTE TO THAI FOREIGN MINISTER LAYING CLAIM TO VIETNAMESE MASF ASSETS BROUGHT TO THAILAND. THIS DEMAND, ACCORDING PRESS, WAS REINFORCED BY A RENEWED INTERVENTION FROM HANOI, WHICH REPORTEDLY HAS "FORMALLY REQUESTED" RETURN OF PLANES BY THAILAND TO SOUTH VIETNAM, POINTING OUT THAT ISSUE COULD AFFECT BANGKOK-HANOI RELATIONS. SIDE BY SIDE WITH THIS STORY ON FRONT PAGE OF BANGKOK "THE NATION" IS REPORT THAT THAI NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL IS RECOMMENDING IMMEDIATE THAI RECOGNITION OF NORTH VIETNAM AND HINTING THAT RECOGNITION OF THE NEW REGIME IN SAIGON IS ALSO IMMINENT.

2. DESPITE THESE DEVELOPMENTS, RTG SEEMS TO HAVE PULLED ITSELF TOGETHER AND DECIDED TO SPEAK WITH ONE VOICE ON ISSUE OF DISPOSITION OF VN MASF ASSETS. PRIME MINISTER KUKRIT PRAMOT TOLD THE PRESS YESTERDAY THAT THAILAND WOULD "HAND OVER" THESE ASSETS TO THE U.S. WHILE A FINAL DECISION ON THAILAND'S POSITION TOWARDS THESE ASSETS IS REPORTEDLY TO BE MADE AT A CABINET MEETING TUESDAY, MAY 6, IT SEEMS CLEAR THAT THE THAI MILITARY, THROUGH SUPREME COMMAND, HAS SUCCEEDED IN SUPPRESSING FOR THE MOMENT ANY CONSIDERATION OF HANDING OVER VIETNAMESE OR CAMBODIAN ASSETS TO NEW COMMUNIST REGIMES. IN ACHIEVING THIS RESULT, SUPREME COMMAND WAS UNDOUBTEDLY GIVEN A KEY INSTRUMENT IN THE FORM OF OUR DECISION TO OFFER CONSIDERABLE ASSETS TO THE THAI. AS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED, WE CONVEYED NEWS OF THIS TO KRIANGSAK IMMEDIATELY UPON RECEIPT OF AUTHORITY FROM WASHINGTON.

3. DISPOSITION OF THE FORMER VIETNAMESE ASSETS IS LIKELY TO REMAIN A CONTENTIOUS ISSUE HERE. IF HANOI AND SAIGON REACT SHARPLY, THOSE THAI WHO ARE PRESSING MOST URGENTLY TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH THEM CAN BE EXPECTED TO BELABOR THE RTG HEAVILY. THE RTG, WHILE WE EXPECT IT TO STICK TO

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ITS CURRENT POSITION, WILL SEEK, TO THE EXTENT POSSIBLE, TO PUT THE BLAME ON US. IT THEREFORE CONTINUES TO BE IMPORTANT THAT WE REMOVE THOSE ASSETS THAT WE ARE TAKING OUT OF THAILAND AS PROMPTLY AS POSSIBLE, CONSISTENT WITH THEIR CONSERVATION.

4. IN RESPONSE TO EXTREME PRESSURE FROM THE THAI PRESS ACCCOMPANIED BY MUCH FLAG-WAVING, KRIANGSAK FEELS IT ESSENTIAL THAT A MEDIA VISIT TO UTAPAO BE CONDUCTED TOMORROW (MAY 6). THIS MEDIA VISIT, IN WHICH WE WILL ALSO INCLUDE FOREIGN PRESS, IS FOR THE PURPOSE OF REPORTING THE DEPARTURE OF THE FIRST PLANELOAD OF CAMBODIAN REFUGEES AT APPROXIMATELY 1100 LOCAL TIME. KRIANGSAK WISHES MOVEMENT OF THE OUTBOUND VNAF AIRCRAFT TO BE

SUSPENDED DURING THE DURATION OF THE MEDIA VISIT AND WE
AGREE THAT THIS IS A GOOD IDEA.

5. THE PRESS WILL ARRIVE AT UTAPAO AT 0900 LOCAL TIME MAY 6
AND WILL REMAIN FOR APPROXIMATELY THREE HOURS. DURING THAT
TIME, THERE SHOULD BE NO VISIBLE MOVEMENT OR PROCESSING
OF VNAF F-5'S, A-37'S OR OTHER VNAF AIRCRAFT BEING
TAKEN OUT OF THAILAND. PROCESSING CAN BE RESUMED AS
SOON AS THE MEDIA DEPART FROM THE BASE.

MASTERS UNQTE KISSINGER

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